Council Highlights: October 2001

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year.

This issue covers the months of July, August, September and October 2001.

Fall 2001 application statistics continue to show increase

Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) recently released its application statistics for the fall 2001 admissions, and the figures continue to show an increase in the number of applicants seeking admission to full-time undergraduate studies at Ontario universities. A total of **60,540** applicants from Ontario secondary schools submitted **241,415** applications (university program selections). This represents an increase of 2.3% in the number of individuals applying when compared to the same date last year. Actual applications were up 6.7% indicating that more applicants are applying to a greater number of individual institutions.

Application volume from applicants *not* currently registered in an Ontario secondary school increased by 13.2% this year. This category of applicants includes college and university transfers, applicants from other provinces and individuals who completed secondary school in past years. Part of the increased volume is attributed to the Centre's user-friendly, online web application (see story on page 4).

As of September 20, ***acceptances*** of offers of undergraduate admission received by OUAC (which are compared here with figures at the same time last year) were as follows:

- **Teacher Education** – 436 students or an increase of 6.4%
- **Secondary School** – 963 students or an increase of 2.1%
- **Non-secondary domestic, year one** – 1,357 students or an increase of 10.5%
- **VISA (domestic and foreign)** – 596 students or an increase of 22.4%

This year, the Centre is anticipating a significant increase in application volume to teacher education programs and a 15% increase in applications from Ontario secondary school students. While application volume to medicine and law programs has been stable for several years consistent with North American trends, it is expected that applications to medical school will increase this year.

Update on secondary school issues

Over the summer, representatives of Ontario's universities met with officials of both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to consider issues concerning the implementation of the new Ontario Secondary School (OSS) curriculum in Grade 11 and Grade 12. Work continues on examining the implications of differing marking practices in the old and new OSS curriculum.

Earlier this year, the Ontario Universities' Council on Admissions (OUCA) developed guidelines based on a preliminary assessment of the new OSS program and curriculum. As noted in the guidelines, which were released in the 2001 spring issue of INFO magazine: "During the transition from the current to the new OSS program and curriculum, universities will consider applicants and their academic programs from either system, equally. Students who present OAC course results in combination with 'U' and/or 'U/C' will be considered equally provided that they

meet all the course prerequisites and diploma requirements specified by the universities to which they have applied."

When the Ministry of Education introduced what it termed "destination-based" courses into the new curriculum, the universities, as the "destination community" for U and UC courses, expressed a desire to play a role in course development. Consequently, the Ministry established a process that involved academics in the writing and evaluation of U and UC courses. University subject specialists were also asked to review the Grade 11 Course Outlines, documents that are designed to assist teachers in presenting course material and in gaining access to appropriate resources in the field.

Currently COU is co-ordinating the selection of academics to work on the Grade 12 U Course Outlines. Also underway is a broad consultation of experts from the university community to validate a new Grade 12 course in Interdisciplinary Studies. COU is additionally involved in consultations with the College of Teachers about means of facilitating the participation of academics in the Professional Learning Program. The College is to establish and supervise the program in response to what was originally the provincial government's "teacher-testing" program.

New international medical graduates program introduced

On June 14, 2001, Ontario Minister of Health Tony Clement announced funding for a new program to license fully qualified international medical graduates (IMGs). The Assessment Program for International Medical Graduates, established under the auspices of the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM), will provide a unique opportunity for IMGs to gain access to Ontario practice through a comprehensive assessment and screening program. IMGs who successfully complete the assessment program will help to meet the physician human resource needs of underserviced communities in the province. Information about the new program was sent to potential applicants early in October.

COU commissions University Applicant Income Study

In spring 2001, COU commissioned Acumen Research Group to undertake a review of family incomes of university applicants across Ontario. According to the findings, students from low-income families are applying to Ontario universities in increasing numbers. The study, which examined the financial status of Ontario university applicants for the years 1994 to 2001, found that the number of applicants from the lower segment of the income distribution increased from 1994 to 1998. Between 1998 and 2001, the number of these applicants increased from 22% to 28%.

Acumen Research used tax file data and postal codes to review the 1994 to 1998 applicant pool. From 1998 onwards, it used its own University Applicant Survey that collects data on family income. The findings of the survey have recently been published, and the report will be available on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca) by the end of October.

OPAS Visionary Seminar scheduled for November

The Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) will present its fifth Visionary Seminar on November 7, 2001. Mike Lazaridis, President and Co-CEO of Research in Motion (RIM), will share his vision of the future for not only his company but also the wireless communications industry. This year's host campus is the University of Waterloo. All universities in Ontario and invited institutions in British Columbia and Alberta will participate via a live satellite broadcast and web cast. Participants at each campus will include faculty and students, as well as local business and community leaders. Bell Canada, a founding partner in OPAS, is corporate sponsor for this year's seminar.

Farewell to ADM David Trick

Executive Heads gathered on October 11 to bid farewell to David Trick, former Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of Training, Colleges and Universities. COU Chair Mordechai Rozanski noted that, although the landscape of postsecondary education has changed dramatically during his six years as ADM, Mr. Trick managed to forge a significant link in the productive working relationship that developed between COU and the Ministry. COU President Ian Clark echoed similar praise, noting that Mr. Trick's motivation has always been the advancement of higher education through the promotion of appropriate public policy. He has assumed his new role as Vice-Provost, Administration, for the University of Guelph/ Humber College initiative.

EKOS Research Group presents findings to Council

COU commissioned EKOS Research Associates to undertake a study on public perceptions of quality in Ontario universities. COU worked with EKOS to develop a series of 10 questions, which were added to EKOS's syndicated study, that would help to determine which are the factors the general public perceives to have the greatest influence on the delivery of a quality education. EKOS representative Charles Graves presented the findings of the study at Council's October 12 meeting. The top five factors influencing the quality of education are:

- professors and instructors with a high degree of teaching skills;
- a well-stocked library that makes use of leading-edge technology;
- well-maintained and equipped classrooms;
- a wide choice of courses and programs of study; and
- providing students with the opportunity to work with leading researchers.

Minister attends Executive Heads' Roundtable

On October 11, 2001, Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, attended the first Executive Heads' Roundtable for the 2001-2002 academic year. The Minister joined Executive Heads of Ontario universities for a portion of their afternoon session, as part of a series of ongoing exchanges between the universities and the Ministry.

COU invites chairs of COU affiliates to advocacy briefing

On October 19, 2001, the chairs of COU affiliates will meet with Council Chair Mordechai Rozanski, COU President Ian Clark and other representatives of the secretariat for a briefing and a discussion of emergent issues and how these issues affect Council's advocacy process. The meeting will provide an overview of the public policy environment facing Ontario universities today and examine how these institutions will be positioning their collective response to key issues such as enrolment growth, funding, accountability and secondary school reform. All COU-affiliated groups covering academic and administrative support matters were invited to attend and, additionally, were invited to provide an outline of specific issues emerging in their respective areas that could also be addressed collectively. For a listing of COU affiliates, visit the Council's web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Number of online web applications increases dramatically

OUAC has implemented its secure, web-based application systems in its various application divisions – and since then, use of the efficient, user-friendly system has increased dramatically. For fall 2000 admissions, over 32,500 individuals applied for admission to Ontario universities entirely online. This includes over 21,000 non-secondary domestic applicants, 5,300 foreign applicants and 6,100 teacher education program applicants. Over 291,000 individuals visited the Centre's web application site this past application cycle.

OUAC's automated web application for the province's medical programs for 2002 admission went live in mid-July 2001. As of September 20, 122 medical applications were completed entirely online: personal application data forms, supplementary forms, applicant profiles, autobiographical sketches required by the universities, academic data from prior institutions (including the automated transcript request system) and other data. Ontario's medical schools are strongly encouraging all their applicants to apply using the Centre's web application site, and hard-copy application forms are only printed (off the web) upon request. It is expected that over 95% of medical school applicants will apply online this year.

Ontario's law schools agreed to the Centre's plan to develop a complete web application system for law schools for the 2003 cycle. This automated system is now under development and will be operational in the summer of 2002.

The Centre's largest application division, the Ontario secondary school division, is now field-testing its web application with the co-operation of seven school boards across the province. This pilot project, which is based on the complete web application process, will involve at least 5,000 secondary school applicants this year. OUAC will use the results of the pilot to fine-tune the web application, which will be fully implemented across the province in time for 2003 admissions. This service will be key to processing the increase in application volume resulting from the double cohort of secondary school graduates in that year.

To handle these web applications and to prepare for the increased volume in the next few years, the Centre's computer capacity has also been significantly increased. The online application addresses are:

- for medicine at www.ouac.on.ca/omsas/ or
- for teacher education at www.ouac.on.ca/teas/

Review of university enrolment patterns completed

In February 2001, the Committee on Enrolment Statistics, Projections and Analysis (CESPA), under the auspices of the Committee on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA), began a review of past and present enrolment patterns in Ontario universities. The following perspectives were employed: historical, based on overall enrolment patterns from the 1960s to the present; detailed, based on enrolment patterns including more detail regarding full-time versus part-time patterns, shifts in program, gender, level and demand; and future, including population projections and projected enrolment patterns.

According to the findings of the review, demographic change has been an important factor influencing overall enrolment growth in Ontario universities, particularly before the mid-1980s. However, additional factors – including changes in participation rates and government policy – have also had an impact on enrolment levels between 1963 and 2000.

The review also found a number of noteworthy enrolment patterns at a more detailed level. These include the decline of graduate enrolment in the 1970s; the decline of part-time enrolment in the 1990s; the growth in the female participation rate in the 1980s; the shifts in enrolment by program area; the growth in demand for places in science, engineering and business/commerce; and the registration by a greater proportion of females and by individuals from Asian countries.

The report of the review's findings will be published and made available on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca) ideally by the end of October.

COU Standing Committee continues to monitor Bill 132

The COU Standing Committee on Relationships with Other Postsecondary Institutions continues to monitor the implementation of Bill 132, including the development of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB). In April 2001, Don Baker was named Director of

PEQAB. Board members representing various areas of expertise – including universities, colleges, law, and academic-program accreditation – were appointed in July 2001. In early September, committee members met with Dr. Baker to offer comments on the draft handbook for applicants developed by PEQAB and to discuss the relationship between COU and the board.

Summer Institute on Learning Technologies

On August 14-16, 2001, the Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and its industry partners, IBM and SGI, held the third Summer Institute on Learning Technologies at the Bank of Montreal's Learning Institute. Kevin Costante, Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, was a featured speaker at the Institute, which was attended by representatives from each of Ontario's universities as well as by senior industry representatives. University representatives were chosen by their respective Vice-President, Academic, to participate. Over the course of the three-day event, information on emerging technologies and trends was shared; new initiatives were outlined and discussed; and participants had the opportunity to exchange best practices and experiences.

Dell Computer completes modular program offered by OPAS

OPAS recently completed a year-long, multi-module program in Business and Management Skills for Dell Computer Corporation. Instructors from the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, the University of Ottawa and Wilfrid Laurier University, through the Laurier Institute, participated in developing and delivering five separate modules in-house at Dell's Toronto location. The program, which is designed for up to 20 participants, was run back-to-back to accommodate the 40 Dell managers who requested to participate in the successful modular program.

Council welcomes new members

This year, Council welcomes seven new members, two new presidents and four academic colleagues:

- Dr. Maurice Elliott, Department of English, York University
- Dr. Hermann Falter, President of Laurentian University
- Dr. Gilles Patry, Rector of the University of Ottawa
- Dr. Paul Perron, Principal of University College University of Toronto
- Dr. Shelagh Towson, Head of Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
- Dr. Daniel Woolf, Dean of Humanities, McMaster University

2001 edition of COU Briefing Notes

The 2001 edition of the COU Briefing Notes, which provides an overview of key issues and facts concerning Ontario universities, was recently released. The briefing book is designed to provide background information and to complement existing institutional briefing books on Ontario university issues for members of the Council of Ontario Universities and university governing bodies. It will be available on COU's web site (www.cou.on.ca) by the end of October.